DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 304 372 SO 019 703

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TITLE Global Feminism through Class Consciousness and Integrative Feminist Politics: The Case of Republic of Korea.
PUB DATE 26 Jun 88
NOTE 32p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Women's Studies Association (10th, Minneapolis, MN, June 22-26, 1988).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Employed Women; Females; *Feminism; Foreign Countries; Nationalism; Political Issues; *Politics; Position Papers; *Sex Discrimination
IDENTIFIERS *Federation of Korean Womens Organizations; *South Korea

ABSTRACT

This paper examines in two parts the Korean women's movement of the 1980s. Part 1, "National Unification and the Task of the Women's Movement in Korea" contains an overview of Korean unification attempts and discusses the role of the women's movement. The Federation of Korean Women's Organizations (FKWO), formed in 1987, is an umbrella organization for religious and political women's associations. Nationalism must become an ideology of the movement, and an active role by women must be included to achieve unification. Part 2, "Toward a Grass-Roots Women's Movement in Korea: Through Class Consciousness," describes the plight of the employed women, the lack of sexual equality in Korea, and the FKWO's political activities, strengths, and weaknesses. The FKWO has been successful in gaining women's union organization rights, the abolition of early retirement at age 25, and the release of a political prisoner. The FKWO's strength lies in its grassroots appeal and its efforts to thwart the military government's oppressive rule, while the organization's weakness involves neglect of some women-centered issues such as unequal sexual division of labor in the home and the work place. (DJC)

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# Global Feminism Through Class Consciousness and Integrative Feminist Politics : The Case of Republic of Korea

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Paper

From The 1988 National Women's Studies Association Conference, June 22-26

University of Minnesota

Minneapolis, Minnesota

SO 019 703

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## Introduction

In the 1980s, Third World and the U.S. Women of Color have been developing diversified feminist perspectives based on their own experiences in their respective historical, social and cultural contexts. Their insistence on interrelatedness of various forms of oppression of cultural imperialism, development, class, colonialism, race and national movement have contributed towards formulations more comprehensive perspectives on women and multi-level strategies for social change.

One common feature in Third World women's experiences is the need for making connections between the struggle against women's subordination and the larger social movements for national and social liberation from dictatorial militarism and dependent capitalist economy.

After over a decade of dialogue among women, feminist women of the world, especially Western feminists have come to realize that what women are experiencing in their respective societies are interconnected by patriarchy and world political economy. This realization has made them see the world in more interrelated way by making the connection between women's experiences in one's own and in other societies.[1] Therefore, only by bringing the common struggle against women's oppression and social/culturally specific movements together, feminist movement can become inclusive enough to develop into a international movement.

In this article, we will describe and analyze how Korea national reunification and democratization movements have been interconnected with the women's movement in the Republic of Korea in the 1980s.

National Unification and the Task of the Women's Movement in Korea

I. Introduction

The historical role of the Korean women's movement in assuring national sovereignty dates back to the early 1910s when it formed a united front with organized independence fighters to wage a fight against colonialist Japan.[2] With such historical background, the contemporary women's movement is also engaged in participation in the current debate on the issue of national unification.

National liberation in 1945 was followed by a period of United States military government in the South. At that time, national women's organizations were severely split between the leftists and the rightists over the proposition of joint trusteeship rule by the United States and the Soviet Union. Yet, they were of the same voice in demanding the establishment of a unified nation. Their demand for one nation and one government, however, was ignored; the nation was finally divided into two as a result of conflicting interests among national leaders and allied nations.

In 1948, a general election took place in the south without the participation of the northern half, to set up a separate government. This led to the inauguration of the First Republic (1948 - 1960), which was strongly anti-communist. Since then, the nation's policy on unification has gradually become more liberal.

The First Republic of Seung Man Rhee's government took up a hostile policy toward the North, which called for opposition to communism and conquering of the north by military means. An historical case highlighting the belligerent unification policy of the government was the execution on charges of spying of Cho Bong-am, president of a progressive party.[3] He publicly called for peaceful unification. The last incident which affirmed little change in the perspective of the government on national unification took place in the late years of the Fifth Republic (1981 - Feb. 1988). In 1986, a National Assembly man was arrested on charges of asserting that national unification should be given top priority over anticommunism.

Even though past governments were accused of utilizing the issue of national unification and banning its public debate in order to maintain their grip on power, there were times when North and South Korea came close to finding a breakthrough on the issue. For instance, the two Koreas issued a joint communique in 1972 calling for the promotion of mutual trust. They also held rounds of Red Cross talks and even exchanged home-visiting delegations.

Debate on national unification in Korea has been closely tied to the process of democratization. Outbursts of debate on national unification have always come on the heels of historical incidents which gave the people hope for democratization. Examples are: the April 19, 1960 Student Uprising, the collapse of Yusin Dictatorship (1972 - 1979), the October 26, 1979 Incident and, most recently, the citizens' revolution for democratization in June of last year.

With the direct election of the president in December 1987, the Sixth Republic (Feb. 1988 to the present) shook off the traditional disgrace of having a government with little legitimacy. Slogans of student activists shifted from "Down with the Dictator" to "National Unification". On May 15, 1988 Cho Sung-man, a university student calling for national unification, stabbed himself and jumped off the top of a building to his death. On June 10, university students and the government clashed as the students attempted to attend, against government warning, a North and South Korean students' Talk at the Village of Panmunjom. These two incidents have sparked a new widespread debate on national unification, which is now sweeping the whole nation.

With these latest developments concerning national unification in mind, I believe that the women's movement cannot exist separately from that movement. I will first try to review the present stance of the Korean women's movement on national unification and then offer some suggestions for the future strategies.

## II. Present Place of Korean Women's Movement in National Unification Debate

Since the First Republic, most of the formally established women's organizations have intentionally distanced themselves from debate on national unification, blindly advocating the government's highest priority policy - anti-communism. The women's movement in Korea was led until the late 1970's by the Korean Council of Women's Organizations. It restricted its function to representing women's interests and institutionalizing legal devices designed to elevate the status

of women. Criticizing the Council for its indifferent attitude toward national issues, the Federation of Korean Women's organizations was formed in 1987 under the slogan of "Nation, Democracy and People". The Federation has concentrated on assuring the basic rights of underprivileged women and committed itself firmly to the cause of democratization and national unification. As a result, the women's movement is presently being led by two forces: conservative-moderate and progressive.

The momentum for incorporating national unification as a major task into the women's movement came first in 1985. The Women's Equality Association offered "The Structure of National Division and Women's Issues" as the title of the keynote address at its third annual meeting. The speaker, Prof. Hyo Jae Lee of Ewha Womans University, spelled out the hardship national division and ideological confrontation force upon women.[4] She talked about the difficulties of women who lost husbands and sons in the Korean War and had to eke out a living as major providers of families. She also introduced cases in which women were subjected to unfair treatment from the government only because they came from families with members who defected to the North. She also pointed out tragic experiences of war orphans and separated families, especially girl orphans who eventually become prostitute. Prof. Lee had already raised women's problems caused by the nation's division in 1979.[5] The Women's Equality Association was restructured and renamed the "Women's Democratic Association" in 1987, and now is a member of the FKWO.

Leaders who were not professional politicians organized the Democratic Unification People's Association (DUPA) in 1981 and continues to conduct a general education program about unification. The Women's Department of the DUPA has cooperated with the FKWO as a member association.

The National Council of Churches in Korea has undertaken a primary role in raising the national unification subject. In 1983, KNCC established a "Committee of Unification Studies" and officially issued "KNCC's Stand on National Unification and Peace" at the General Assembly Meeting on February 29, 1988. In this declaration, the KNCC asked for the withdrawal of the US Army from Korea and for the closing of the US United Headquarters after the peace treaty between the South and the North.[6] This must be promulgated with agreement among the allied countries - U.S.A., U.S.S.R., China and Japan - rather than the agreement signed to end the war in 1953. The World Council of Churches' annual conference met April 25 - 29, 1988 in Inchon, Korea on the theme, "Peace in Korean Peninsula". Since then, national unification has become a world-wide subject of all churches.

In conjunction with the church men's activities, the Korean Women Theologians Association held the Fourth Seminar for the Theoretical Formulation of Korean Feminist Theology in March 1987 with a theme of the Unification and Task of Feminist Theology. The Fifth Seminar was held in March 1988 under the theme of "the Unification Women, Church", and finally promulgated a declaration of Korean Women Theologians on the Peace and Reunification of the Korean People in April 1988. In the declaration,

they proposed a meeting of christian women from the South and the North of Korea as a strategy for action. The KWTA is a member of the FKWO.

Meanwhile, the KNCC Women's Committee held a Forum of "Unification and Church Women in Korea" on 24th and 25th April in Inchon, Korea. In a title of "the Divided Society and Women", Prof. Hyo Jae Lee[7] emphasized that the sacrifice made by women is the foundation of the security and the reproduction of the divided nation. Despite the fact that working class women contributed greatly to the national economic development, the wealth of the nation is scarcely distributed equally among the poor families. Instead, a big sum of the national income is allocated to maintain the hostile confrontation between the North and South. She also pointed out that the stationing of the American troops in Korea paved a way for poor women to be prostitutes.[8] Prof. Soon Kyung Park of Ewha Womans University emphasized the role of church women as "the mothers of history if they awake from sleeping and suggest a right road to reach national Unification". And she suggested the Third Way as an approaching step toward unification. She explained as follows: "Korea's international neutralization, free from the American and USSR power blocs, Korea's unification beyond South - North Korean conflicts, and the assertion of this on theological grounds".[9] Woo Jeong Lee,[10] former professor of Han Kook Theological Seminary and the present chairperson of the KFWA referred from the Bible as the foundation of national unification.[11] Patricia J. Patterson, Executive Secratary, Northeast Asia, Methodist General Board Global Ministries, delivered a speech on "Liberation Bound Together: US Responsibility and the Work of the Churches in Relation to Korea".

She said, "We must first confess as US Christians that our country is in large measure responsible for the division through more than four decades of selfish

and divisive policies, and that we have not yet as a people and a nation committed ourselves to work with the Korean people for real peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula." 12

NCCC - USA identified two policy issues or goals as priorities for the US Government: 1) a formal statement that it is a policy of the US to support the peaceful reunification of Korea and 2) a call for negotiations to end the war and bring about a comprehensive peace settlement as a step toward the reunification of the Korean peninsula. Koreans welcome US church women's advocacy of the Korean unification front.

The Federation of Korean Women's Organizations reaffirmed to take a leading role for the nation's unification with a slogan of "Women! March Forward the National Independent Front!", in commemoration of the World Women's Day of March 8th in 1988.

Reviewing the unification movement up until now, it is understood that the unification debate in the women's movement in Korea has been sporadic. In spite of the FKWO's initiation toward unification, they did not organize any systematic action programs and political strategies. They must shift from the men's viewpoint to the women's perspective to reinterprete national unification to enhance the general welfare of women, and to develop women's autonomous unification movement.

III. Task of the Korean Women's Movement toward National Unification

"Unification is our hope". This is a title of a song all Koreans are happy to sing. It is generally known that Koreans more eagerly long for unification

than do the Germans of both nations being similarly divided. Only about two hundred years have passed since the German nation in modern terms was formed. Korea has more than 1200 years of history as one national community, with a single race and a unique cultural background.

In spite of the ardent desire involved, reaching unification is a long and wearysome process. It is not only because the conflict between the left and right exists, but also because the cold war between the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. is a stumbling block. As a winner of World War II, the U.S.S.R. would not give up the right to its political alliance with the northern part of the nation, and accordingly would not agree unification through a liberal democratic system of the South. It is clear that the U.S.A. having the same reason as the U.S.S.R. would not agree to be unified through the people's democratic system of the North. It is absolutely necessary that the international treaty guaranteeing peace in Korea must be signed by the countries around the peninsula that would be responsible for keeping the peace. In this regard, it is meaningful that church women in America have recommended peaceful unification of Korea to their government. At this time an approach toward unification must start from the line where the political system of both sides is to be realistically recognized. There have been several suggestions regarding appropriate political systems including one in which unification sets up a permanent neutralized nation[13] and another a confederation.[14]

I have already suggested nationalism as an ideology of the Korean women's movement.[15] This nationalism, being distinguished from that used by western countries in the 19th century to rationalize their expansionism, includes freedom,

equality and independence. This type of integrated model could be traced back to "Three Equalism" suggested by Cho So Ang, an independence fighter in early 1930s.[16] This Three Equalism had been developed by national independence fighters including the Temporary Government in Shang Hai as an integrated common ideology to unify both the right and left. Considering the fact that the nation was divided without complete overcome of Colonial period, Korea is still in the childhood stage in the world history.[17] In this juncture, nationalism is inevitable.

It is a political system which guarantees both freedom and equality. It is based on parliamentary democracy together with a social welfare state in which the nation is responsible for absolute poverty, not the individual.

The economic system to support this welfare state must direct to the revision of capitalism. Realization of well-being in a society has something to do with poor women's problems. Most women who work in the informal sectors in urban areas and women in farming area are excluded from national medical insurance services at the present time.[18] Daughters of poor parents are not receiving higher education, even though equal educational opportunity for everyone is declared by law. In fact, daughters of poor families are guaranteed only elementary compulsory education for six years. The situation is reversed for sons in poor families. In order to secure a better financial situation after retirement, poor parents willingly provide higher education for their sons. This may mean selling their farming land. Daughters who finish compulsory education usually leave home, moving to cities to work in factories as unskilled manual workers. They send money home for their younger or elder brothers' educational fees for higher education. Although their goal is to seek more affluent living in the future, they can marry only men from the same poorly educated background,

and continue to work as unskilled workers as well as her own. This vicious cycle of a poor mother's destiny is transmitted to her descending generations. Pfovision of extending compulsory education would guarantee poor women a better life. Considering the fact that extension of the social security system is closely related to a higher standard of living for poor women, the excessive national defense budget to sustain a divided Korea has resulted in reducing the welfare of poor women.

This is clearly revealed by the comparison that the national defense expenditure amounts to 31.6% while only about 8.4% is allocated to the social development field from the government general account in 1987.[19] Therefore, the women's movement must take a leading role in achieving national unification. Unfortunately, only a few women's organizations have begun to discuss national unification and have no systematic coalition. The Federation of Korean Women's Organizations has not reinterpreted the coordination of national unification from the women's perspective. It must shift from the passive position of following male organizations leading the way to autonomous strategies for unification.

For the time being, it is very advisable for church women in Korea to take a leading role in spreading the public debate on unification. Attention should be paid, however, to the fact that another religious conflict would be added on to the conflict of ideology if they try to find a justification of national unification only in Christian doctrine. It is imperative that a women's coalition must be made encompassing all kinds of religious women leaders including Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism and Chon Do Kyo, a national religion. A precedence can be seen in the March 1st Movement of 1919, when all the religious leaders agreed to fight together against Japanese colonial rule. Likewise, the Pan Women's Unification Movement should be organized to campaign regardless of religious backgrounds.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

Reviewing the current situation of the national unification debate in Korea, we understand that national unification and the women's movement are closely related. But it is only in the beginning states on the issues and it lacks systematic and theoretical studies approaching unification. In order to have consensus among women for taking a leading role in this issue, I recommend the following:

1. To organize a Pan Women's Unification Association. The Korean Council of Women's Organizations, a leading power for the revision of the Family Law, and the Federation of Korean Women's Organizations, a leading power for democratization, must be united or have a close coalition for unification movement.
2. To establish a committee of unification studies to develop autonomous strategies.
3. To offer history classes for women making them aware of the international political dynamics between Japan, U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. at the end of the World War II which created the divided Korea.
4. Provide a workshop for the North Korean and the South Korean women together to share their problems caused by the country's division and to discuss strategies for achieving national unification.
5. To have coalitions with Korean women residing in foreign countries where informational materials on North Korea are available, encouraging them to create a positive atmosphere toward Korean unification movement in respective countries.
6. To establish a "Unification Development Committee" in Parliament and to gain the participation of women parliamentary members.
7. To organize an international women's coalition group among women of Korea, U.S.A., U.S.S.R. and Japan to facilitate the national unification in Korea.

## Toward a Grass-roots Women's Movement in Korea Through Class Consciousness

### I. The New Wave of Korean Women's Movement in 1980s

In the later half of 1980s, the Korean women's movement turned into a new era. The highly educated young women, having participated in the students' demonstration in colleges against military government, organized their own feminist groups such as Women's Hot Line, Toward Another Culture, Women's social Research Group, Korean Women Workers Association, Korean Grass-roots Women's Organization and its local branches, and so forth. They raised questions of the violence in household, prohibition or hindrance of women workers' union, and all policies discriminating against women in employment, advancement and retirement. Meanwhile, women workers struggled with problems of low wages and inferior working coditions, and fought for organizing their own unions.

These organizations are quite different from previously existing conservative ones mostly run by the celebrated women leaders since the end of the World War II. The former, on the one hand, set their goals of movement not only on the feminist theoretical frameworks, but in the context of the oppressive political situations which cause sexual oppression, on the other hand, the latter has been concerned about enlightenment, consumers' movement, and middle-class women's employment rather than about the social change.

In addition, the social organizations for democratization set up divisions or departments of women within them, through which they have been related to women's movements : for example, The Women's Committee of the Association of Grass-roots

Movements for Democratic Reunification, The Women's Division of the Young Men's Association for Democratization Movements, The Women's Department of the Federation of Grass-roots Buddist Movements, The Women's Division of the National Catholic Farmers Organization and so on.

The birth and activities of these organizations and divisions are closely related to the political and economic situations in Korea. The military governments, sustained since the coup d'etat took place in 1961, have repressed the primary rights of people and imprisoned dissidents in order to strengthen their power, hiding their lack of legitamacy of political power, and therefore, have come to hide the democratization process of the nation. The economic policy of the last two decades, which has made Korea wholly dependent on foreign capital and market, is driving Korean people into the further burden of foreign debt. The outflow of the economic surplus to overseas has caused the national economy of Korea to become subjugated. The strong pressures of the United States to open up imports turned this country into its economic colony. Importation of foreign agricultural products without any protection has destroyed the agricultural economy together by low prices for local farm products. The low price of rice, which has been coercively maintained by the government for strengthening the external competence of exports through keeping low wages, has driven rural people into poverty and made most of them leave their farm lands for the large cities. They settled down in the urban slum areas and supplied unskilled labor forces of lower wages in the informal sector of the labor market.

Daughters of the poor rural and urban families often have become their economic supporters. The girls are pushed into factories to work more than 10 hours a day for wages much lower than needed to maintain the lowest level of subsistance. Attempting to be tied closely to the internal and external capitalists, the govern-

ment has not allowed workers to organize trade unions including those in multinational corporations. In order to protect their rights to work and survive, women workers of low wages, main labor forces in these multinationals, have had to fight against the police of Korea as well as their foreign employers. The struggle of women workers against their employers pretending to close corporations to destroy trade unions has recently increased and succeeded in most cases. Large number of the poverty-stricken daughters who failed to get jobs have turned into prostitutes for international tourists, and they are exploited economically by government policies for sex tourism under the guise of gaining foreign exchanges. The Olympics, which requires great amount of funds, are the cause of evictions of slum area women squatters living in unlicensed houses or shacks which will have to be destroyed due to beautification policy of the capital city, Seoul.[20]

It is clear that under these circumstances, government policies for the development of women or direction for sexual equality will never bring about a egalitarian society. The ruling Democratic Justice Party at the time of the Assembly election in 1985 announced publicly that they would pass an amendment to the Family Code, which is discriminating against women, but in-fact that has not yet been submitted to the Assembly. The Korean Women's Development Institute which is financed by the government is proposing mainly those women's issues that are useful to the government. Even though most women are forced to quit their work and benefits when they get married or become pregnant, the government has made no response to the protest against the sexual discrimination of married women by employers. Motherhood receives no protection at the workplaces. Even the Act of Equal Employment, passed abruptly through the Assembly in 1987 by the majority support of the ruling DJP members to win women voters in the presidential election, has not functioned effectively for women. Those activities engaged by women who

keep protesting for democracy and trying to organize women's labor unions have been surpressed with sex tortures and other physicalviolence by the national police.[21]

II. The Birth of The Federation of Korean Women's Organizations

The leaders and members of women's organizations, formed in 1980s, identified all the oppressions of women as the products of the military dictatorship, and they found that Korean women's liberation can not be achieved without larger social and political changes. Their recognition is common with that of other Third World countries in that women's movements are inevitably linked' to the social structures and relations which pertuate these situations.[22] Under these severe political conditions, individual women's organization is too weak to confront their powerful enemies, i.e., the military government and the patriarchal social systems to change women's conditions. Coping with the difficulties to abolish sex discrimination and to achieve social change, they needed solidarity among themselves. Finally, 24 women's organizations, mentioned above, came to form the Federation of Korean Women's Organizations(FKWO)[23] in February 1987 to engage more effectively in political activities.

Defining Korean Women's movement to be the nationwide mass oriented democratization movement, FKWO strives to achieve women's liberation and democratization of the nation simultaneously through coalition strategies developed by feminist women's organizations.[24] Its leaders insist that theoretical frameworks of Third World women's liberation, including those in Korea, should, in contrast to Western feminism, be dealing with all inequalities of their respective societies. Proper form of women's movement,[25] they assert, should not be confined to obtaining equal rights between sexes regardless of how other aspects of society are, but should

involve the change of all aspects of the contradictory reality that is responsible for the the oppression of women and should build a community in which people of all classes participate equally in the decision-making process. Furthermore, they consistently assert that Korean women's movement should be the struggle against foreign interference that hinders the Korean national reunification, autonomy and democracy. By these perspectives, FKWO specifies its goals in two areas : one is to restore women's rights to work and survive, particulary for working class and rural women, and to struggle against sexual oppression, e.g., violence against women, and commercialization of sex ; the other is to achieve democratization of the nation.[26] This paper will focus on the former, the sexual oppression.

III. Political Activities of FKWO

FKWO was formed as a result of a series of specific issue-oriented coalition among women's organizations since 1984. The first case that prompted the women's coalition was the rape of political female student-prisoners arrested on the charge of demonstration against the government by the national police officers in 1984. An adhoc committee composed of 11 women's organizations brought a charge against the Minister of Home Affairs, the chiefs of Chungyangree and Sudaemoon police stations, who were supposed to be responsible for the rape, held large meetings in which members of those organizations discussed the strategies against the rape, sat in rallies, and issued newsletters blaming the government.

There have been a series of actions which culminated in organizing of FKWO. The followings are some of the successful cases which FKWO has effectively acted upon.

1. Struggle for Working Class Women's Rights to Work

In order to aid reinstatement drives of laid-off women workers due to their attempts to organize democratic trade union and pay-raise campaigns, FKWO

paid visits to sit-down strikers against their employers who temporarily closed their factories. In addition, FKWO mailed written protests to the employers, released statements demanding the rehiring of unfairly dismissed women union leaders, and conducted the boycotting campaigns against products of the companies involved. These actions finally resulted in making employers reinstate women workers, and guarantee the formation of their unions. Some of the successful cases were the trade union of Sungdo Textile Company (Tomboy women's clothes) in 1985, of Jeil Clothing Inc. (Bang Bang jeans) in 1987, of Maxtech Co. (American multinational subcontracting with computer software) in 1988, of Mookuk Notebook Co. in 1987, and of Furea Fashion Co. (German multinational producing clothes) in 1987.

FKWO self-evaluated these joint actions of boycotting campaigns most of which lasted longer than a month have left a strong impetus on employers.[27]

First, the most important reason of their success was solidarity among workers which enabled them to maintain their long autonomous struggle. The joint campaign between union leaders and FKWO through a unified counterplan committee provided women's organizations with an opportunity to establish close ties with women workers.

Second, joint campaigns were very successful for the accomplishment of workers' demands, such as reinstatement of all the workers laid off illegally, the abolishment of oppression of workers, and the pay-raise equivalent of the amount requested by workers.

Third, the boycott campaign against products of the companies suppressing workers' formulation of unions, which usually is defended for the sake of right movements, was functioning as a strong oppressive instrument for workers'

struggle against companies which resulted in arousing great public sympathy.

2. The Abolition Campaign of Earlier Retirement of Women

The coersive retirements of women upon marriage[28] occur very often in Korea despite of its illegality.[29] There were two cases for which joint political activities of women's organizations were held: the case of Lee, Kyoungsook (1985) who was judged in her damage suit on a traffic accident to be rewarded with the amount of money accounted by the rule of women's retirement at the age of 25 (generally accepted age of marriage for women), and the case of Chou, Sonyo (1987) who was forced to quit her job by her company upon her marriage inspite of her ten year employment.

For the former, denouncing the overt sex discrimination of Korean jurisdiction, women's organizations formed a countermeasure committee and conducted a series of campaigns against earlier retirement of women upon their marriages. They were engaged in systematic multi-level movements, appealing to social sympathy through discussion meetings presenting results of a public-opinion poll on the judgement of Seoul Local Court and of a research on an economic evaluation of domestic labor, raising funds for lawyer's expense, and so on. As a result, the rule of retirement at the age of 25 was thrown away on the second trial. The success of this case has come to convince women that solidarity among them must be needed for the campaign against sex discrimination, and to gain confidence in themselves.[30]

For the latter, while encouraging Chou, who was working at Daehan Investment and Trust Company as a clerk, kept fighting against the company oppression to quit her job in various ways such as ordering to work at a remote local branch, insulting her in the presence of her coworkers, and so on, FKWO mailed written

protests to the company and conducted a deposit-drawing campaign. Finally, about two months later, the company yielded and reinstated her to her original position in Seoul main office.[31]

3. The Protest against Sex Torture in Boochun Police Station

During the severe political suppression period in which many dissidents were arrested and tortured, a barbarous sex torture case of a female political prioner, Kwon, Insook, who was arrested on charge of using a fraud ID card to work in disguise as a factory worker[32] stirred up public rage in 1986. Denouncing the immorality of Chun, Doowhan's government, women's organizations created a countermeasure committee, held a petition signing campaign for her release, and staged rallies demanding the punishment of the offender, a police officer in Boochun police station and resignation of Chun's government. In addition, in coalition with other social organizations for democratization and a group of lawyers fighting for political prisoners, the committee appealed for a new trial of sex torture case to the Supreme Court.[33] As a result of their intensive efforts, she was released in 1987. The application for a new trial was accepted in 1988 and the offender, the police officer Moon, Kwidong, is currently under trial in Inchon Local Court.[34]

4. The Annual Korean Women's Conference

Women's organizations, which created a temporary counterplan committee when the forementioned sex torture issue came up, needed some events which would elicit solidarity and consciousness-raising among themselves. They inaugurated, therefore, the annual conference called 'Korean Women's Conference' (KWC), on March 8th, 1985 for the purpose of setting their goals and tasks, and of publicizing them. The day is the World Women's Day established in 1911 in memory of the great rally of hundreds of women workers in New York shouting to demand equal rights and to

allow them to organize a trade union.[35]

The Conference distinguishes greatly its aim and content from the counterpart, 'National Women's Conference' which used to be held in October by the Association of Korean Women's Organizations (AKWO) composed of existing conservative women's groups, and used to invite the first lady of Republic of Korea. One of the characteristics of KWC can be found in giving an award of 'Woman of the Year' for appreciating and encouraging a woman or a group in recognition of her services for women's liberation. The award differs in terms of its purpose from the others which are usually given to model mothers.

The award of Woman of the Year 1986' was given to Kwon, Insook in 1987, who exposed the immorality of Chun's government to the society and filed a suit against Moon, Kwidong with the Inchon Local Court on charge of sex torture.[36] Her brave decision to reveal Moon's barbarous sexual violence by giving up the Korean ideal of virginity before marriage was one of a series of events which triggered 'the June Protest in 1987' which made the President Chun to allow a general presidential election.

On the day of KWC, 1988, the award was given to the union of Maxtech women workers who fought against their employer who closed the company temporarily to destroy the union, and at last, won after a more than fifty days of long struggle.[37]

IV. Analysis of FKWO Activities

The result of this analysis will be presented as follows:

A. Strengths of the FKWO Movements

1. In contrast to existing women's organizations, FKWO is to be characterized by its systematic social movement with grass-roots organizations.[38]

2. Gaps between different groups in Korean society such as between Christian and non-Christian women, poor working class and middle class women, and between urban and rural women have been narrowed, and a road to cooperation among them to accomplish their common interest has been paved.[39]

3. The political activities of FKWO differ from those of existing women's movements in that the former tries to deal with the problems of rural, working, and poor women simultaneously so that they can have equalities within the existing social structure.

4. By carrying out democratization side by side, FKWO has made linkages with other social activist groups such as students, youth, religious and cultural movements for democratization. FKWO and these groups have shared the realization that their common enemy was the dictatorial military government which was mainly responsible for economic and sexual oppression of poor Korean women so that they could make coalition against their common enemy.

In short, the efforts of FKWO to liberate grass-roots women, which are seen as a significant change among Korean women's organizations' commitment to bring about the larger societal change, set in motion for a new era for the history of women's movement by making women visible in the whole historical process of national democratization movement, the struggle against economic and sexual

B. Weaknesses of FKWO

1. FKWO has not been concerned about women-centered issues such as unequal domestic sexual division of labor, underemployment and unemployment of highly educated women, identity crisis of middle-class housewives, and the reform of the Family Code to improve status of married women and mothers in the family.[40]

2. The feminist perspective of FKWO focusing on working class women is likely to result in the neglecting of the patriarchal ideologies, such as sanctity of motherhood, the Confucian ideologies of female virginity, and of male dominance.[41]

Therefore, Korean women's movement should be focused on women-centered political activities in the future within the context of a broader political perspective of the national democratization and national reunification movements.

V. Strategies for the Future

Even though the vital actions of FKWO have marked a new era in the history of Korean women's movements, they remained part of the democratization movement in Korea. In addition, despite of its coalition with other social movement organization, FKWO seems to not have raised men's consciousness. The followings are some of the feminist political activities that the Korean women's movement could focus on in the future:

1. Issues concerning all classes of women including those of the poor working class women should be the goal of FKWO. Because women are discriminated against even by the men engaged in democratization movement, the struggles against

## Summary and Conclusion

Since feminism is a transformational politics and world view and women's economic and sexual freedom cannot be achieved in a society such as Korea without simultaneously achieving political democracy and national reunification, Korean female activists have been concerned with the removal of all forms of inequalities and oppressions in their society which they believe to be inter-related and globally linked. From the outset, globally conscious feminists in Korea had analyzed their political actions in global context and frameworks to bring about a more profound change. They adopted multiple goals and integrative strategies by building coalition among women's groups and with women's labor movement, political democratization movement, and national reunification movement groups to eliminate militarism, economic exploitation and sexual oppression.

Since 1945, when Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule, various women's groups have emerged. However, these women's organizations have been predominantly composed of college-educated upper middle-class women of leisure or in professions whose main goals for joining have been fellowship and maintaining class status. Furthermore, because many of these organizations had been subsidized by male-dominant public and private institutions and agencies, such as government and churches, many often have been concerned with middle-class, male-defined issues and activities.

In more recent years, despite the accelerated economic growth and urbanization in the 1970s and 1980s, the economic conditions of rural women and migrant women in urban slums have worsened. Urban working class women's efforts to organize in their workplaces have been severely restricted by the military government backed

inequalities and patriarchal ideologies should be engaged in simutaneously.

2. Inorder for the Korean women's movement to be a mass-based one, it should actively organize the grass-roots level women from all the regional and local communities.

3. In order for the FKWO to be effective and autonomous organization, the various programs for intensifying solidarity among member organizations should be developed.

4. Korean feminist theory should be developed through feminist political activities in the context of the larger social movement e.g., national democratization and the reunification movements from the women-centered perspective.

5. Korean men's liberation based on men's consciousness-raising groups should be organized because women's liberation can not be achieved without men's liberation from patriarchal ideology and behavior.

management and the international political economy. Consequently, their sheer physical survival has been increasingly threatened by economic exploitation, violence against women, trafficking of women, and sex tortures of female political prisoners.

Deeply concerned with these multiply oppressed poor working class women, about twenty women's groups, nine of which are affiliated with Christian organizations, have formed the Federation of Korean Women's Organizationsin February 1987. Since then, FKWO has worked to eliminate sex tortures, to boycott companies which laid off female workers illegally, and to terminate early retirement of single female workers at the age of 25. FKWO has engaged in these women-defined political activities in coalition with women's labor movement, National democratization movement, and national reunification movement groups with the belief that working class women could not be free under the patriarchal management and labor unions, military dictatorship and the divided Korea.

In conclusion, Korean feminists have developed a global feminism while engaged in the national political struggles by making connections between the macro and micro-level political, economic and sexual inequalities in their society and in the world.

Foot Note

1. I am greatly indebted to Charlotte Bunch's idea of global feminism which she has developed in recent years in her book Passionate Politics : Feminist Theory in Action, St. Martins Press 1987, and her speeches in public meetings.

2. Yong Ok Park (1984), History of Women's Movement in Korea, (Seoul: Korean Institute of the Spril and Culture)

3. Wan Kyu Choi (1988), "A Basic Policy and Changes on the Unification of the Conservative Opposition Party", National Intelligence,(Seoul: National Intelligence), p.111

4. Hyo Jae Lee (1985), "Women's Reality and Women's Movement through 40 Years of Divided Nation", Sociology of the Divided Times, (Seoul: Han Kil Sa)

5. Hyo Jae Lee (1979), "Women's Issues in the Divided Times", Theory and Reality of the Women's Liberation, Hyo Jae Lee (ed.), (Seoul: Creative Writings and Criticism Co.)

6. Chong Hwa Park (1988), "Christians' Stand on National Unification" National Intelligence, April Issue, (Seoul: National Intelligence), pp. 142-149

7. She was the one of professors who proposed to the government to withdraw Marshal Law in 1980, and was involuntarily resigned from the university for five years.

8. Hyo Jae Lee (1988), "The Divided Society and Women", Unification and Church Women (Seoul: KNCC Women's Committee)

9. Soon Kyung Park (1988), "The Unification of Korea and the Task of Feminist Theology", Unification and Church Women (Seoul: KNCC Women's Committee), pp.78-86 She was retired from the university in July 1988.

10. She read the Declaration for Nation's Democratization in March 1st 1976 at Myung Dong Catholic Church where the joint worship service of the Catholic and Protestant in celebrating the 57th March 1st 1919 Movement. She was arrested in violating the Emergency Presidential Decree No.9 with other 17 persons involved. After ten days thorough investigation in custody, she was released and the judgement had proceeded through March 22, 1977 in the nonrestraint condition until the execution of penalty upon her was finally suspended. In the declaration, it has been proclaimed that the national unification is the most important task all the Korean have to undertake today. KNCC Human Rights Committee (1987), Democratization Movement in 1970s (Seoul: KNCC Human Rights Committee), pp.684-845

11. Woo Jeong Lee (1988), "Bible Study on Peace and Unification", Unification and Church Women (Seoul: KNCC Women's Committee

12. Patricia J. Patterson (1988), "Liberations Bound Together: US Responsibility and the Work of the Churches in Relation to Korea", Unification and Church Women (Seoul: KNCC Women's Committee), p.46

13. Bong Yoon Choi (1988), "My Scheme on National Unification", National Intelligence, April Issue, pp.74-79

14. Sil Park (1988), "This is Dae Jung Kim's Scheme on National Unification", National Intelligence, April Issue, pp. 102 - 109

15. Sook Ja Kang (1987), "Review on the Formulation of Emerging Ideologies of the Women's Movement in Korea", Women's Studies (Seoul: Korean Women's Development Institute)

16. Hak Sup Chung (1984) "Three Equalism by So Ang Cho", Korean Thoughts in Modern Society, Yong Ha Shin (ed.) ( Seoul: Ji Sik Publishing Co.)

17. Jung Jin Park (1988), "Meaning and Strategy of the Unification in Cultural Anthropological View", National Intelligence, April Issue, pp. 80-84

18. 59.8% of population received medical insurance benefit in 1987. Budgetary Dep't of the Economic Planning Board (1987) Statistical Collection related with Finance, pp. 126- 7

19. Budgetary Dep't of the Economic Planning Board (1987), pp. 88 - 89

20. The Federation of Korean Women's Organizations(1987), "Statement by the Women's Movement of Korea -- 1987," p.1, English version, issued on the day of Inauguration Conference.

21. Ibid., p.2.

22. Miranda Davies(1983), Third World--Second Sex : Women's Struggle and National Liberation, London : Zed Books Ltd., p.ii.

23. The brochure of the Federation of Korean Women's Organizations(FKWO)(1987).

24. Ibid.

25. Lee, Woo Jung(1987), "Toward the Establishment of Proper Form of Women's Movement," in Democratic Women, No.1(1987. 7. 10), FKWO, p. 2.

26. The brochure of FKWO(1987).

27. FKWO(1987), "Effect of Boycott Campaign against Bang Bang Jeans," in Democratic Women, No.1, p.4.

28. Shin, In Ryong(1985), Women, Labor, and Law, Seoul : Pulbit, p.136.

29. The retirement policy for female telephone exchangers at 43 of age was formally filed by its sufferer in 1982. The case will not be included in this discussion.

30. Women's Social Research Group(1985), "We Wo'nt Overlook the Rationalization of Women's Retirement on Marriage," Women's Newspaper, 1985.10.14, p.2.

31. Women's Hot Line(1987), "Whole Story of Chou, Sonyo's Fight," Boetul, 1987.3, pp. 5-6.

32. Many Korean university dissident students intentionally got employed in disguise to be involved in labor problems since 1970s. Miss Kwon, for that purpose, forged her ID card to conceal her status of student.

33. KNCC, Committee of Human Rights(1987), Our Daughter, Miss Kwon, Seoul : Min Joong Sa, pp.103-116.

34. Joong Ahng Daily Newspaper, 1988.1.30.

35. The brochure of FKWO(1987).

36. The pamphlet, issued on KWC 1987, p.8.

37. Ibid., issued on KWC 1988, p.8.

38. Lee, Hyo Jae(1987), "Open the New Horizon of Women's Movement," Democratic Women, No.1(1987. 7. 10), FKWO, p.3.

39. Ibid.

40. Such concerns are not found in the newsletters of FKWO, Democratic Women, No.1-4, by now.

41. For this comment, the words of Anabella Rodriguez from Mozambique seem to be suggestive : "It was easier to eliminate colonial, bourgeois influences that were imposed on us and identified with the enemy, than to eliminate generations of tradition within our society," in "Mozambican Women after the Revolution," Miranda Davies(1983), Third World--Second Sex,London : Zed Books, p.131.